

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

USMISSION USBERLIN PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN

CINCEUR

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 065474

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, EAIR, WB, US, UK, FR, UR

SUBJECT: BERLIN AVIATION: POTENTIAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF
ROUTE DIVISION

1. SUMMARY: UK EMBASSY OFFICER (CORNISH) CALLED AT
WORKING LEVEL (EUR/CE) MARCH 18 TO RAISE TWO UK FOREIGN
OFFICE CONCERNS IN CONNECTION WITH FORTHCOMING ROUTE DIV-
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SION ON BERLIN-IGS ROUTES. UK CONCERNS DEALT WITH (A)

POSSIBLE SOVIET PRESSURES WHICH MIGHT BE BROUGHT AGAINST BRITISH AND FRENCH WHEN PAA NO LONGER USING CENTRAL CORRIDOR FOR REGULARLY SCHEDULED FLIGHTS, (B) SIMILAR TEMPTATIONS FOR SOVIET INTERVENTION ON CORRIDORS SHOULD ALLIED USE OF ANY CORRIDOR BE CURTAILED FOR EXTENDED PERIOD FOR EXAMPLE, DURING POSSIBLE STRIKE. DEPTOFFS ASSURED UK EMBOFF THAT DEPARTMENT WOULD NOT PERMIT PIECEMEAL THREAT TO CORRIDORS AND WOULD TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS IN STRIKE SITUATION TO ENSURE MAXIMUM CONTINUED AIR SERVICES TO BERLINERS. POSTS ASSESSMENT OF UK CONCERNS WOULD BE APPRECIATED. END SUMMARY.

2. UK EMBOFF NOTED THAT, WITH FORTHCOMING ROUTE SWAP, THERE NO LONGER WOULD BE ANY REGULARLY SCHEDULED PAA FLIGHTS

IN CENTRAL CORRIDORS, ALTHOUGH BA AND AIR FRANCE WOULD CONTINUE TO USE THAT CORRIDOR. HE INDICATED THAT FCO WAS CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE FUTURE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS CHANGE, PARTICULARLY POSSIBILITY THAT SOVIETS MIGHT USE FACT THAT USG INTEREST NO LONGER SO DIRECTLY INVOLVED TO TRY TO SQUEEZE UK AND FRENCH OUT OF CENTRAL CORRIDOR. WHILE US CHARTER FLIGHTS PRESUMABLY WOULD CONTINUE TO USE CENTRAL CORRIDOR ON OCCASION, BRITISH FEAR THAT THESE MIGHT BE MORE VULNERABLE TO SOVIET PRESSURE THAN REGULAR SCHEDULED PAA FLIGHTS. IN CONSIDERING HOW PROBLEM MIGHT BE RESOLVED, UK HAS EXPLORED POSSIBILITY (PRESUMABLY WITH BA OFFICIALS) OF RESCHUFFLING CURRENTLY AGREED ROUTE DIVISION SO AS TO GIVE PAA IGS SERVICE TO FRG CITY WHICH REQUIRES IT TO USE CENTRAL CORRIDORS. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS HOWEVER HAVE CONVINCED BRITISH THAT NO REAL BASIS EXISTS FOR FRUITFUL SOLUTION ALONG THIS LINE.

3. UK EMBOFF ASKED WHETHER USG SEES SAME POTENTIAL PROBLEM-. HE NOTED THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT USG VIEWS ALL CORRIDORS AS UNITY SO THAT SOVIET ACTION IN ONE CORRIDOR WOULD BE SEEN AS AFFECTING ALL THREE. DEPTOFFS REPLIED THAT ROUTE SWAP DID APPEAR POSE NEW PROBLEMS WHICH DEPT WOULD WANT TO THINK THROUGH THOROUGHLY. DEPTOFFS WISHED ASSURE UK IMMEDIATELY, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, THAT USG VIEWS CORRIDOR AS ENTITY AND WOULD VIEW ANY EFFORT TO DIMINISH ALLIED RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN ANY PORTION OF CORRIDORS AS MOST SERIOUS POLITICAL MATTER. AIR CORRIDORS CONTINUE TO BE VIEWED BY USG AS PRIME GUARANTEE OF BERLIN'S SECURITY AND VIABILITY IMPORTANCE, WHICH IN NO WAY DIMINISHED BY GREATLY IMPROVED SITUATION CONCERNING GROUND ACCESS BROUGHT ABOUT BY QA.

4. UK EMBOFF THEN TURNED TO POSSIBILITY THAT STRIKE WHICH RESULTED IN NON-USE OF CORRIDOR FOR EXTENDED PERIOD MIGHT PROVIDE SIMILAR TEMPTATION FOR SOVIET PRESSURE ON CORRIDOR REGIME. WHILE ADMITTING IT UNLIKELY THAT STRIKE WOULD CRIPPLE ALL AIRLINES SERVING BERLIN SIMULTANEOUSLY, UK WOULD APPRECIATE US ASSESSMENT OF DANGERS STRIKE SITUATION MIGHT PRESENT. FOR ITS PART, IN EVENT OF PAA STRIKE, UK WOULD MAKE EFFORT TO INDUCE BA TO PICK UP AT LEAST SOME OF THE FLIGHTS TO EACH CITY SERVED BY PAA, AND UK ASSUMED USG WOULD TAKE SAME ACTION WITH PAA IN EVENT OF BA STRIKE. DEPTOFFS

INDICATED THAT US STARTED FROM PREMISE THAT FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES MAXIMUM LEVEL CONTINUED AIR SERVICE TO BERLIN MUST BE MAINTAINED EVEN IN STRIKE SITUATION. IN EVENT OF PAA WORLD WIDE STRIKE, DEPARTMENT WOULD NORMALLY MAKE STRONG EFFORT IN FUTURE AS IN PAST TO EXEMPT BERLIN SERVICE FROM STRIKE. IN EVENT OF BA STRIKE IN BERLIN, DEPT WOULD FAVOR PAA TAKING OVER AS MUCH OF DEFAULTED BA SERVICE AS POSSIBLE DURING STRIKE PERIOD TO MAINTAIN AIR SERVICE AT AS CLOSE TO NORMAL LEVEL AS COULD BE ACHIEVED.

COMMENT: WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT LIKELY THAT FACT THAT PAA IN FUTURE WOULD NO LONGER FLY REGULARLY SCHEDULED FLIGHTS IN CENTRAL CORRIDOR WOULD PROMPT SOVIET SALAMI TACTIC APPROACH. IMPORTANCE WHICH USG ATTRIBUTES TO MAINTAINING ENTIRE CORRIDOR REGIME UNALTERED IS WELL KNOWN TO SOVIETS WHO WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO REDUCE ALLIED RIGHTS IN ANY PORTION OF CORRIDORS WOULD IMMEDIATELY INVOLVE USG AND LEAD TO SERIOUS CONFRONTATION. MOREOVER, PAA UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTINUE TO USE CENTRAL CORRIDOR EITHER FOR CHARTER FLIGHTS OR FOR WEATHER DIVERSIONS. NONETHELESS, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO GIVE THOUGHT TO VARIOUS ADDITIONAL MEASURES WHICH COULD BE TAKEN TO ENCOURAGE USE BY USG AIRCRAFT OF CENTRAL CORRIDOR. AS ONE EXAMPLE, WE MIGHT WISH TO INFORM PAA THAT, DUE TO REDUCED WORKLOAD IN CENTRAL CORRIDOR, WE WOULD NOW ENCOURAGE PILOTS TO OPT FOR CENTRAL CORRIDOR WHERE THAT SEEMS PREFERABLE FOR ANY REASON. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ADDRESSEE POSTS VIEWS ON CONCERNS RAISED BY UK. INGERSOLL

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